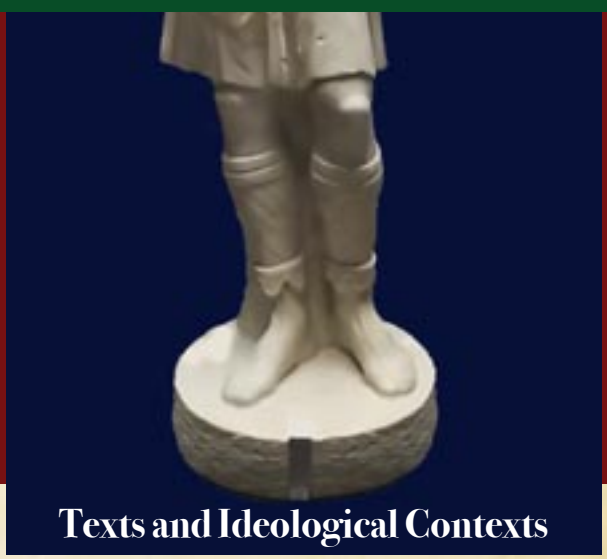
Eliseo Ferrer

The Christian Myth, According to the Texts



Texts and Ideological Contexts of Early Christianity

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Early Christianity

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Introduction

FROM THE ORPHIC–PLATONIC MYTH OF DIVINE INCARNATION (OF PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN GNOSIS) TO THE LATE JUDAIZATION, CARNALIZATION, AND HISTORIZATION OF ECCLESIASTICAL CHRISTIANITY

I will make no value judgment about past events; history is irreversible and neither anyone nor anything can change it, let alone judge it from the present. But readers of this work must know that, at the end of the second century, the architects of the apostolic Christianity of the Church broke the rules of the Hellenistic-style Christian mysticism, which was based on the rationality of mythical discourse, and replaced it with a complex fabulation that, in order to be believed, cried out for the stereotypes of archaic magical thought, far older than the mythical thought that underpinned the foundations of early Christianity. The bishops of the Church, so to speak, confused things; they turned the Greek-origin salvific allegory into an impossible chronicle of society artificially Judaized, and gave ontological reality within history to figures from certain (midrashic) narratives that merely conveyed to lower levels of initiation the true essence of a multicultural soteriological myth: the descent and incarnation of the Son of God; the teaching of the soul's immortality of Wisdom; the descent and incarnation of the divine Logos; or the revelation of the celestial Anointed One: the illuminator of divine wisdom and the mystery of its hidden treasures.

This work offers an exhaustive analysis of the Christian myth, but subordinated in its formal part to the diachronic and historical segment encompassing the period between the Hellenistic context of the first century BCE (Alexandrian Middle Platonism, Samaritan mysticism, Hellenistic Judaism of the Decapolis, Hellenized Judaism of the Alexandrian, Syrian, and Mesopotamian diaspora, etc.) and the foundation of the apostolic Christianity of the Church at the end of the second century. Two long centuries in which the ideological and

soteriological structure of the myth experienced an extraordinary evolution: from the meaning of the Orphic-Platonic myth of the descent and incarnation of divinity (as soul-spirit) in early Christian mysticism to the radical denial of mythical discourse by the Church, through an ideological structure and a narrative discourse that ended up denying the "rationality" of myth from much older frameworks, typical of the magical thinking implicit in Catholic dogmatism. For, as we well know, the Church, through its Judaization, denied the great wealth of pagan mythology from its origins, which the bishops, deacons, and presbyters completely ignored (as did the entire Western tradition for eighteen hundred years); to offer us, from theology, a dual myth never self-acknowledged as such: a hybrid mythology comprising, on the one hand, the Orphic-Platonic myth of the origins, made flesh, materialized and ontologically placed in history, and, on the other hand, the Mesopotamian-origin myth of apotheosis and divine exaltation, through the presence of a fleshly man who, in the ontological sense of his materiality, never ceased to be God or the Son of God. I speak of the Savior as "true God and true man," a formula with which the Church at the end of the second century put an end to the long trajectory of Pythagorean Orphism, which, under reinterpretation through Platonism, had contributed to the spiritual mysticism of the primitive Christian gnosis of the first century (Syrian, Samaritan, and Alexandrian).

I must warn the reader that when I speak of the "Christian myth," I am in no way referring to the clumsy interpretation made by the Church (based on the undeniable foundations of Greek rationalism) of Greco-Roman and pagan myths in general, interpreting them as statements of what was non-existent, inauthentic, and unreal; that which implied falsehood despite its appearance of truth. "That which, contrary to what it proclaimed, did not exist or could not exist in reality, simulating ontological truth within a given narrative context where only mere discursive fiction or fabulous legend operated." Xenophanes (565–470 BCE), before Plato and Aristotle, was the first to criticize and reject the mythologies of Homer and Hesiod; in such a way that the Greeks progressively emptied the *mythos* of all religious and metaphysical value. "Opposed both to *logos* and later to *history*, *mythos* ended up meaning everything that could not exist in truth." It ended up expressing a sense (the fabulous, unreal, inauthentic, and false) that, incidentally, was inherited by the entire Western tradition, and whose genuine and true meaning (that of 'mythical reason') many academics and university professors still do not understand today.

This perspective, although I do not dare to call it mistaken, must be pointed out as, in my view, an extremely biased, short-sighted, and very poorly informed vision compared to the richness and depth of the meaning of myth in ancient cultures. Ultimately, a reading that I personally dislike, and which, to avoid confusion, I generally designate with another term. Thus, when I refer to the false, the unreal, the inauthentic, and non-existent, I do not speak of "myth," but of "fable," "fabulation," "legend," or "fabulous legend"; while I reserve the terms "myth" and "mythology" to refer to matters of greater scope and depth.

This interpretation of myth as that which pertains to the false and unreal was completely surpassed by cultural studies of the past twentieth century. For more than a century and a half ago (since Tylor and his *Primitive Culture*, and Malinowski and his *Myth in Primitive Psychology*) the mythical narrative has been discovered to be something akin to a constitutive and foundational discourse of certain primitive institutions: a principle of reality stated in an apparently fabulous narrative, if taken literally, but (in contrast to the earlier model) with hidden teachings and meanings that aimed for and achieved a "true discourse." That is, as far as my ability allows me to project into the remote past, I use the term "myth" in all its generative purity; to refer, in an anthropological sense, to that principle of reality and "rationality" derived from a timeless and very simple narrative discourse (a tale), from whose paradigmatic meaning socio-cultural behaviors were regulated and universal or particular aspects of the surrounding phenomenal reality were explained, on which the material survival of men of primitive cultures depended.

I must emphasize that mythical discourse and its discursive rationality—prelogical in nature and based on the narrative structure of a timeless story—nevertheless represented a significant human achievement in contrast to the archaic "magical thinking" of Frazer and the "primitive religion" of Gustavo Bueno, to the thought and "societary reason" of Durkheim, and to the "savage thought" of Lévi-Strauss, where only the "I" and the "you" functioned as the personal structure of a social reality that (so to speak) admitted no third parties. And a highly illustrative example of that superior level of mythical culture is provided by the teachings of the myth of Dionysus Zagreus in the religion of Orpheus: an apparent tale for old women and children that, nevertheless, contained all the constitutive elements of Pythagorean Orphism (body and soul, incarnation of the divinity, superiority and divinity of human beings, etc.), which made possible the spiritual mysticism of early Christianity. A myth, that of Dionysus, which, moreover, allows us to perfectly understand, in full detail, the starting

point of the analysis of the Christian myth that I carry out in this work, along with its transformation and its various manifestations in the first two centuries of our era.

Dionysus Zagreus ("the great hunter") is today considered the early and genuine representation of the Dionysus of the vulgarized beliefs of the Polis religion: as the deity who descended to the underworld and ascended to the heavens to attain full divinity on Olympus. His story, seemingly superficial and insignificant (deeply recreated and re-signified by Orphic spirituality), narrated that he was the son of Zeus and the mortal Semele (or of Zeus and Persephone, according to the tradition initiated by Callimachus), to whom his father, the king of the gods, granted at birth the throne of the universe. This, apparently, provoked the jealousy of Hera, sister and legitimate wife of Zeus, who saw in the newborn the result of a never-ending chain of her husband's adulteries. Feeling betrayed, scorned, and enraged, Hera incited the Titans to destroy the divine child. And indeed, the Titans obeyed the goddess's command; so that, deceitful and malevolent, they lured the child by offering him toys, a mirror, a spinning top, articulated dolls, and all kinds of distractions, trying to separate him from his protective surroundings and remove him from his guardianship. Thus, when the divine child was absorbed in his games and distractions with the mirror, the top, and the dolls, the primordial divinities attacked him brutally, dismembered him, boiled the pieces of his body in a cauldron, and devoured his flesh without mercy or pity. In response, the father did not delay. Furious and enraged at the affront, Zeus struck the Titans with his deadly thunderbolt, reducing them to ashes. And from these ashes, according to the Orphic anthropogony, along with the clay of the earth, the first human beings were formed, who contained a double component: corporeal matter, from the clay, and the spiritual element (the human soul) with a dual tendency toward good (a product of the divine spark of Dionysus contained in the ashes) and a tendency toward evil (a product of the Titans' ashes). That is to say, according to Orphic mythology, Dionysus was dismembered, his remains boiled in a cauldron, and devoured by the Titans, who, being struck by Zeus's thunderbolt, generated the ashes that contained the divine light of the just-ingested god-child, and which, along with the clay, gave rise to the duality of human nature: the corporeal-material and the divine-spiritual. In other words, human beings, as a consequence of their origin, had a dual nature (body and spirit), with a double component also in the soul, or *psyche*, having inherited a Dionysian, positive part, and a Titanic,

negative and perverse one. "And, as partial heirs of the Titans, human beings were also obligated to atone for that 'original guilt.' Such atonement extended over several lives, because the soul was immortal and, when the body in which it was housed died, it transmigrated to another." Thus, from our point of view and interest, the divinity (Dionysus) appeared incarnated, within this anthropological dualist scheme, in the interior of the immortal soul of human beings as a spark of primordial divine light. And this occurred not only in the mystery tradition of Orphism, but in many of the spiritualist and mystical traditions of Hellenism, including the immanentist doctrines of Stoicism.

Of course, the Orphic myth of Dionysus (the divine incarnation in the human soul) and the primitive Christian myth (descent and incarnation of divinity in the soul) were, from a narrative and strictly formal point of view, apparently different; but the truth is that, despite presenting different narratives, they expressed the same anthropological reality, rooted in Greek tradition and spread throughout all spheres of Hellenism: the reality of the essential anthropological dualism (animal and divine, material and spiritual, corporeal and psychic) of human beings—a complex synthesis of cosmic materiality (the flesh) and primordial divine spirituality (the soul), which could only be explained through a mythical narrative like that of Dionysus. For original Christianity (with Greek imprint, as we see) partook of the Orphic myth, but lacked a primordial, universal, and canonical narrative; it lacked a foundational text that could explain the later development from a single and unique discursive root. Therefore, based on the very dynamics of the doctrine's development and its contained elements, it becomes necessary, in my view, to turn to three fundamental, basic, and primary texts, which provide us with the first pieces and elements upon whose aggregation and interrelation the gnosis of primitive Christianity took shape. I refer to the supposed Jesus of the anti-Jewish, anti-religious, and pre-Christian Gospel of Thomas (of pre-Pauline character); to the Anointed-One–Christós of the *Odes of Solomon*, within the intertestamental literature of Hellenized Judaism (also pre-Pauline in nature); and to the Jesus–Anointed of the primitive Samaritan and anti-Jewish text of the Gospel of John (likewise of pre-Pauline character). Later, the mystery lore of the death–resurrection of the divinity would arrive, through whose allegorical narrative these primordial figures would be fused by Paul; and, originating from the Hellenized intertestamental Jewish literature, the apocalyptic eschatology of Persian origin would also reach the Pauline letters.

Herein lies the evolving seed, as we shall see, of an intense history spanning more than two centuries, which emerged as a projection of Orphic mythology, began in Alexandria with the Platonism of the *Wisdom of Solomon*, reached its zenith in the Pauline letters, and lowered its curtain with the work of Irenaeus of Lyon. Two intense centuries that offered a dizzying transformation of the original foundations of Hebrew and Hellenistic Christian mysticism, through the fusion of the pre-gnostic myth, with Orphic and Platonic resonances, with the myth of the judge–savior from the apocalyptic literature of Persian origin; through the resultant fusion of both with the mystery mythology of the death and resurrection of the divinity; and, finally and conclusively, through the particular interpretation and fabulation (Judaization, carnalization, and historization) made by the Church in the late second century of the allegory of the incarnation of the Orphic Dionysian myth.

In 2021, I published the book *Sacrificio y drama del Rey Sagrado* (*Sacrifice and Drama of the Sacred King*) (Genealogy, Anthropology, and History of the Myth of Christ), where I offered an exhaustive development—dialectical and historical in nature—of the evolution of the mystery myth of the death and resurrection of the divinity (the tragic, expiatory, and salvific fate of the son of the god or goddess, originating in Neolithic culture, who died and rose again to save the tribe or the nation). In that work, I employed a contextual and dialectical methodology aimed at offering an anthropological and historical perspective spanning ten thousand years of salvific evolution; finally arriving at the myth of the Christ of the Church, which I described as an archaism and a return to the remote past of a savage and bloody Passover (characterized by bruised flesh and spilled blood), as opposed to the tenets of the Gnostic Christ, the postulates of rabbinic Judaism, and the mythical allegories that motivated the practices of mystery rites and cults. I spoke, ultimately, and as the conclusion of that work (which, I repeat, revolved around the myth of the death–resurrection of the divinity) of a "Jewish" Christ (Judaized by the Church, but with no relation to Judaism); whose Hellenistic and Greek (proto-Gnostic) origin was buried beneath the ecclesiastical rubble of Isaiah's Suffering Servant.

Here, the Jesus Christ of the Church also represents the endpoint and conclusion of a process—but of an intense Hellenistic process lasting two centuries, which began from the deep meaning of the Orphic–Platonic myth of divine descent and incarnation, and ended by drowning its sense in the superficiality of the text. It concluded with the unclassifiable, clumsy, and

ignorant interpretation made by the Church of its allegorical meaning, which it literally subjected to a material, ontologically real, and historical carnalization of the son of God. In this work (*The Christian Myth, According to the Texts*), I use an analytical methodology with the goal of formally dismantling the myth and analyzing (both separately and together) all its elements and pieces. A methodology that, as I believe I have stated, I subject to the imperative of the diachronic and historical segment of "Christian" texts ranging from Pompey's conquest of Syria and Judea (64 and 63 BCE) to the final years of Emperor Commodus and the wars with the Parthians (190–200 CE); thus, the process of textual elaboration (key to the development of the Myth) spares me the risk of falling into the abstract, merely formal and essentialist positions of analytical proposals.

In my book *SDRS* I addressed the myth of the death and resurrection of the divinity starting from the sacrificial phenomenon operated around the ritual murder of the Neolithic goddess's son. Let us say that in that 2021 book I explained the "how" of the essential fable of the redemption of the Jesus Christ of the Church: how the myth of the savior Christ, dead and resurrected, had evolved over millennia from the archaic echoes of the expiatory death and resurrection of savior figures linked to Neolithic goddesses. Now, in this instance (2024), I address the "what" of the Christian mythical meaning. What is or what was the Christian myth from the Orphic–Platonic origins of certain sapiential literature (*Wisdom of Solomon*) and of the primitive and pre-Christian gnosis of the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Odes of Solomon*? What happened in that dizzying process of barely a couple of centuries that caused the Greek myth of incarnation to end up becoming, in the hands of the Church, an archaic, paradoxical, and pre-mythical carnal construction?

I also anticipate to readers of this work that it is an enormous absurdity to continue using the stereotypes of Justin Martyr in the twenty-first century; claiming, against textual evidence, that Christianity was a movement born from first-century Judaism. With language very characteristic of the copyists and interpolators of the late second-century Church (language not of his time), Justin rhetorically suggested in the *Dialogue with Trypho* that Christianity had been "a heresy of Judaism" (an impious sect), and that to combat it, the Jews had sent "special men from Jerusalem" to all the world in order to spread what had happened. And the truth is that, eighteen hundred years later, the clichés and ecclesiastical stereotypes still dominate the uncritical and uniformed spirit that characterizes, with hardly any exceptions, all the works and research

conducted on Christian origins. That is, it is still asserted without any textual basis or foundation that Christianity arose within Judaism and gradually separated from it during the course of the second century. Precisely the opposite of what the texts indicate, and also the opposite of what actually occurred... What actually happened was that the Church Judaized, in those late second-century dates, the doctrines and texts of primitive mystical Christianity of Hellenistic character (created by Samaritans, Hebrews of the Decapolis, and Hellenized Jews of Alexandria), just as Irenaeus of Lyon's work explicitly and abundantly details, and as literary and textual criticism attest—through the study of manuscripts and the study of the writing and constant rewriting of Christian works.

As far as I have been able to discover through the scarce texts available, what I find in the first century and in the early decades of the second is not that single, abstract, fabricated, fraudulently distorted, and exclusive apostolic Christianity of the Church (supposedly dominated by the figures of the gospel hero and the Pauline Christ), but the disheartening panorama of a set of mystical and spiritual currents that were completely different and had independent origins, although interconnected through the common myth of descent and incarnation (proto-gnosticism) and/or the myth of the descent or presence (*parousia*) of the celestial savior as eschatological judge (apocalypticism). I previously mentioned three first-century texts that represent three independent gnostic traditions: the IC of pre-Christian *Thomas*, the Messiah–*Christós* of the Judeo-Hellenistic *Odes of Solomon*, and the Joshua–Jesus of the primitive Samaritan text of *John*: very archaic proto-gnostic foundations that was eventually amalgamated in the Pauline letters with the apocalyptic mythology of eschatological expectation and the mystery myth of the death and resurrection of the savior. I believe the time has come to recognize that the apostolic Christianity of the late second century and the Catholic Christianity of the fourth century were the result of a very late cultural, religious, and power-based construction that amalgamated mystical currents from the first century and the first half of the second, completely heterogeneous and independent, according to the texts: some expressed in gnostic terms, and others in apocalyptic terms; some without the mythical and allegorical content of the death and resurrection of the divinity, and others with this mystery content; in which the denominations "Joshua–Jesus" and "Anointed–*Christós*" appeared initially separate and were later fused under the common denominator of Jesus Christ or Christ Jesus; all of them derived either from the Hellenistic and Greek myth of incarnation, or from the Hellenistic myth of

Persian origin of the eschatological presence in the world of the judge-savior. For that reason, I adopt as my own those three fatal and terrible arguments that the advanced students of pontifical universities find driven between the edge of the sword and the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and which were made patently clear in my 2021 work. The first of them refers to Walter Bauer's thesis on the radical pluralism and heterogeneity of early Christianities, which flatly denies the exclusive and exclusionary zero point of the Church's apostolic Christianity. The second of these arguments refers to the proposal of the History of Religions school (Wilhelm Bousset, Rudolf Bultmann, and Walter Schmithals), according to which gnosis, far from being falsely presented as a deviation from the apostolic orthodoxy of the second century, was already present, as we will see, in the textual root and very origins of Christianity. And the third argument is that of those researchers (Rudolf Bultmann, John S. Kloppenborg, and Burton L. Mack) who attributed the presence of Judeo-Hellenistic apocalypticism in the texts of the New Testament to a stage that came after the mysticism of early Christian gnosis (Samaritan, Syrian, and Alexandrian).

Three arguments which, ultimately, form the quintessence of the research I present in this work. For, against those who claim that Jesus was an apocalyptic prophet, a historical figure condemned to die on the cross, I must place before their eyes the content of the texts, which, implacable, merciless, and harshly opposed to the claims of ecclesiastical fabulation, reveal things very different from what we are told. The doctrinal plurality of the texts is, in this sense, manifest and evident... And the first thing that becomes apparent is the fact that the oldest (material) manuscripts, from the third and fourth centuries, do not speak of Jesus; and, if they do mention the full name at times (and not with the sign of the *nomina sacra*), it is to refer to the Old Testament Joshua–Jesus, son of Nun and successor of Moses in the land of Canaan. And if the oldest manuscripts do not speak of Jesus or Christ, nor do they offer us the objectively verifiable interpretative key of the *nomina sacra* (ΙΣ and ΧΣ) that was developed later, the actual texts of the earliest writings are no less revealing: the pre-Christian Gospel of *Thomas*; the Christian text of the *Odes of Solomon*; the primitive Samaritan text of *John*; the *Evangelion* of Marcion; and the earliest textual composition of the Gospel of *Mark*. Not to mention all that Jewish intertestamental literature of an apocalyptic nature, whose texts present a Christianity in which there is no Jesus, nor any earthly history at all—beyond the mythical story of the end times and the coming of the new aeon under the presence of the Anointed–Christ functioning as Son of Man and Judge–Savior.

The pre-Christian Coptic Gospel of *Thomas* does not speak of Jesus (nor of Christ); it speaks of IC (IS)... And if we agree, based on preconceived positions, that these signs (*nomina sacra*) refer to Jesus, then we must also accept that the "Jesus" spoken of in this text—far from the apocalyptic prophet placed within the history of Judea and Galilee—was, in the opposite sense and direction to apocalypticism, an inner voice coming from the realm of light (the twin): a figure originating in the kingdom of primordial unity, emissary of an eternal and immanent Father (the Living One), who, contrary to the trajectory of end-time eschatology, showed his disciples the path of return to the original light. And something similar occurred in the primitive and ancient text of the Gospel of *Mark*, where Jesus was also not mentioned at all, in a time when, supposedly, the writing of the *nomina sacra* signs (and their traditional interpretation) was yet to come. So much so that, if we follow the original research by Josep Rius-Camps on the process and phases of the redaction of the Gospel of *Mark*, in the earliest version of the text the term "Jesus" appeared nowhere; the author referred to the revealer at all times through the use of the personal pronoun.

Where Jesus was indeed mentioned was in the primitive proto-gnostic (and Samaritan) text of the Gospel of *John*, which concluded in chapter 12 of the final and definitive ecclesiastical version, in which the triumphant entry of the spiritual and universalist prophet (Joshua–Jesus) into a xenophobic, exclusionary, and unredeemed Jerusalem facing the power of the Roman Empire was narrated. It was, as we will see in this work, the triumph of spiritualism and the apotheotic entry into the Jewish capital of the Samaritan prophet (*El Taheb*), announced by Moses in *Deuteronomy*; prior to and unrelated to Pauline mysteriology and who, consequently, neither died nor resurrected. A paradigm and distinctive sign of the Hellenistic universalism of Samaria, of the cultured and Hellenized Jews of the Decapolis and Alexandria, and of other Hebrews opposed to Jewish exclusivism and the laws of the Jerusalem Temple. Something that also had to do, most probably, with the first redaction of the Gospel of *Matthew* (prior to its prophetic Judaization), in whose text a Jesus with typically Samaritan traits was presented (a prophet "like Moses"; coming from Egypt, like Joshua, and son of the house of Joseph: the Nazorean or the *Taheb*), judging by the fusion that the primitive textual basis of this gospel made between the two identities: that of Moses and that of the Hebrew savior he had announced.

And, of course, Jesus was also mentioned (and already included Pauline mysteriology) in the *Gospel of the Lord* (*Evangelion* or Gospel of Marcion),

the textual foundation of the Gospel of *Luke* and considered, according to the latest research, as the basis for the entire subsequent development of the gospel genre. A text undoubtedly from the late first century; but which must necessarily be placed in time after the pre-Christian *Thomas* text and the primitive Samaritan text of *John*. And for a fundamental reason: because the text of *Thomas* and the primitive text of *John* lacked (just like the Christ of the *Odes of Solomon*) any death and resurrection of the revealer. This surprising phenomenon—under undeniable influence from Pauline mysteriology—already appeared in Marcion's *Evangelion*, as an allegory of the spiritual power of the Father, ineffable and good, in contrast to the limited cosmic and material power of the creator demiurge, Yahweh. Let's say that the Jesus of Marcion's gospel died and rose again, as a paradigm and manifestation of the superior power of the Father; but not for the forgiveness of sins, rather as redemption of the human spirit from the cosmos, imprisoned in the matter of the creation of the Jewish demiurgic god. Moreover, the Jesus of Marcion was not a "Jesus of history" ("true God and true man"), as the apostolic Church of Irenaeus and Eleutherus would claim fifty years later; but a worldly representation of the same divine Father, radically manifested to the world through the image of a thirty-year-old young man who descended in Capernaum.

Therefore, let no one expect to find a single and exclusive line at the base and foundation of primitive Christianity. As Walter Bauer pointed out more than a century ago, there occurred the surprising circumstance that the genuine, original, and oldest Christian doctrines were declared heretical by the Church. In this context, and contrary to what happened in certain texts—some of which alluded to a Jesus disconnected from the ecclesiastical figure—we also find in primitive Christian gnosis texts where the revealer did not appear characterized by the figure of Joshua–Jesus, but by the figure of Christ, the celestial Anointed One. This is what happened in the *Odes of Solomon*: a very ancient text of Judeo-Hellenistic primitive gnosis, in which Jesus did not appear anywhere, and where Christ, the Anointed of God, was presented as the sapiential revealer manifested in the image of the mirror (a variant of Thomas's twin); where the initiate found (in the Jungian self) the knowledge and wisdom of God. Surprisingly, in this Christian-gnostic work of Hellenized Hebrews, the revealer, Christ, was born of a virgin; walked upon the waters (as Jesus did in the primitive text of *John*), as a graphic representation of the daily transit of the solar *Logos* over the Sea of Galilee; was persecuted and humiliated (just as Jesus was persecuted and threatened with death by the Jews in the first text of *John*); and, although he neither died nor resurrected, he descended into the

underworld before returning to the heavens. Furthermore, I have already said that in most of the apocalyptic intertestamental texts (*1 Enoch*, *Psalms of Solomon*, *2 Baruch*, *4 Ezra*, etc.), it was the Anointed–Christ who appeared as protagonist and agent of salvation–but Jesus did not appear. Although I must acknowledge that this presence of the *Christós* and this absence of Jesus in the early apocalyptic texts was not an indisputable norm, because in the *Sibylline Oracles* we find probably the first evocations of the impaled to the wooden stake (*staurós*) of Joshua–Jesus: "Again – we read in this work – a remarkable man will come from the ether, who stretched out his hands upon the wood of bounteous fruit [the cross], the best of the Hebrews, who once stopped the sun, crying out with beautiful words and holy lips."

And that uncertainty and unease to which the heterogeneity of textual proposals of early Christianity inevitably leads us does not end there; for, very differently from everything we have just seen, we even find "Christian" texts (all of them accepted by the Church) that did not speak of Jesus nor of Christ. One such case is represented by the *Epistle or Discourse to Diognetus*, where, within a clearly Alexandrian context, the Only-Begotten Logos appeared as the sole protagonist of the salvation of the soul. Another was the *Didaché* (or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*), in which the apostles were nowhere to be found, Jesus was not present either, and Christ and Jesus Christ were merely two isolated and decontextualized mentions, completely foreign to the text and unrelated to the story of the ecclesiastical fable. Even these surprising absences were found in a Christian apocalypse composed between the years 135 and 145: *The Shepherd,* of Hermas (brother, according to tradition, of Bishop Pius), who identified the Son of God with the Holy Spirit, with the Name of God, and with the Law of God. "And the Law of God had been placed in the hearts of men by the great and glorious angel Michael, who, to a certain extent, seemed to be identified with the Son of God."

Against those who claim that Jesus was a Jewish eschatological prophet, I must insist that certain intertestamental apocalyptic texts of Hellenized Judaism, prior to the gospels, speak of the Anointed One and the Son of Man, but none of them speak of "their" Jesus or "their" Jesus Christ. Against those who claim that the gospel hero was a Jewish apocalyptic prophet temporally located within Herodian history–and having adopted the threefold argument of the original Christian scheme I just outlined (multiplicity of independent Christian traditions, temporal primacy of gnosis, and later incorporation of apocalyptic mythology into the New Testament narrative)–I must again insist and emphasize that Hellenistic apocalypticism (Persian, Greek, and Jewish)

was incorporated into Christian texts late, after the mysticism of the first-century speculations of Christian gnosis. Let it be clear, therefore, that, according to the texts, the syntagm "Joshua–Jesus" (*Yehoshúa–Yeshúa*) appeared linked, as Savior, to the writings of primitive Christian gnosis; while the syntagm "Anointed–Christós" was presented as the referent of the primitive eschatological Judge of the Hellenistic intertestamental apocalyptic literature.

All of this is developed in this work through a thematic structure that includes a first part, in which the cultural and ideological-textual foundations of the myth of the celestial savior are presented. In the second part, I introduce "the Christian myth in evolution"; or, to be more precise, what we can also call "the convergence of currents in Christian mythology," which includes:

- the myth of the judge-savior (*Saoshyant*) from Persian apocalyptic literature, who makes his appearance on earth (*parousia*) to declare the end of time and carry out the universal judgment of the living and the dead;
- the Orphic–Platonic myth of Greek origin (Dionysus), involving the incarnation of divinity in the soul, serving as the central and ideologically preeminent space of Christian mythology; and
- the Orphic–Platonic myth expanded with the stereotypes of Pauline mysteriology: the myth of the descent, incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God.

And finally, I dedicate the third and last part of the work to what I call "the controversial construction of ecclesiastical Christianity," or apostolic Christianity, from which Catholic Christianity would later emerge. In other words: the controversial, disputed, and radical transformation of the Greek and Hellenistic mysticism of early Christianity, through its Judaization, carnalization, and historization by the Church; through the appropriation of the texts of the Jewish Scriptures from the Greek Bible of Alexandria; and through a deadly confrontation with the other currents of ancient Christianity. All of which gave rise to the expiatory soteriology of redemption through suffering and spilled blood; to the fusion of the proto-gnostic Savior with the Suffering Servant of Isaiah; and to the dual myth of the "true God and true man," which, from the theology of the Church, was presented as a radical negation of all mythology.

As a conclusion, I must say that this work positions itself in radical confrontation with that laughable academic consensus which, throughout the

second half of the last century, accepted (academically speaking) the false historical, carnalist, and Judaic foundations of the ecclesiastical fabulation. A fable that was nothing more than the result of power struggles and a literal and simplistic reading of the allegorical narratives of the three great myths I have discussed: the Greek myth of incarnation, the Hellenistic–Persian eschatological myth, and the mystery myth of death and resurrection. No... Christianity was not born in the manger of Bethlehem or in a carpenter's workshop in Nazareth, as many anachronistic and misinformed professors still try to make us believe today. No... Christianity was not "a heresy of Judaism" either, as Justin Martyr suggested in his *Dialogue*, in a language that blatantly revealed the manipulation of the text and the ideological Judaization of original Christianity. Nor was it a uniform cultural movement that emerged as a consequence of the development of a Jewish seed, nourished and sustained by the longing for universality and spirituality manifested in fleeting flashes of Jewish prophetic literature. As we will see in this work, neither was Jesus a Jew—according to the texts—nor was Jesus a man of flesh and blood, nor did Jesus ever dwell in the rugged terrain of history. The original Christianities formed an enormously heterogeneous universe, the result of the complexity inherent to Hellenism: the result of independent currents of Hebrew–Samaritan, pagan, Alexandrian, and Judeo-Hellenistic origin; all of them united by the common denominator of the myth of the incarnation of the Savior in the human soul—of Orphic and Dionysian origin—and, secondarily, some of them also united by the myth of the presence of the judge-savior of end-times eschatology.

In short, and as we will see in this work, one thing was Christianity, and quite another was the ecclesiastical Christianity (apostolic and Catholic) created in the second half of the second century. That is to say, primitive Christianity—of multicultural and mythical origins—was one thing, and the later Christianity of the Church, anticipated in the work of Justin Martyr and objectively manifested in the work of Bishop Irenaeus of Lyon, was another. The former belonged to the various Gnostic (Orphic–Platonic) and eschatological (apocalyptic) sects of the early first century; and the latter, very different, was the Christianity that Judaized, made flesh, and historicized the Greek myth in order to present Jesus Christ as "true God and true man," announced in the Jewish Scriptures.

Eliseo Ferrer / The Christian Myth, According to the Texts.
Texts and Ideological Contexts of Primitive Christianity.
Note: The original Spanish text of this Introduction contains forty footnotes.

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